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OUR NATIONAL BLESSINGS.

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"He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the Lord!"—Psalm 147: 20.

CAUSES not only produce results, but they impress upon them their own character. The acorn, if you plant it, will not only spring up in the form and with the foliage of a tree, but that tree will be and must be the oak. In every germ of physical life, there are an essential nature and properties, which inhere in every form in which the germ may unfold itself, and which also determine that form. The rose will neither grow spontaneously, nor by any possible culture can it be educed from the thorn. Its leaves, color, fragrance are enfolded elementally in its own seed, and from no other can they be made to grow.

Moral causes and results adhere by force of laws equally sure and abiding. Ignorance and vice not only produce effects, but they perpetuate themselves in the effects they produce. If you look through a community or a nation, and behold a general and high degree of prosperity—if you behold social purity and comfort, agricultural and commercial enterprise and success, educational means and influences adapted to enlighten and elevate the whole people—and the institutions and influences of the government and of religion recognizing the essential equality and the inalienable rights of men, and combining to secure the blessings of justice and liberty, it is indubitably certain that there have been at work causes of a specific kind, containing in themselves

the very essence of that whole scene of prosperity which you behold. And so, on the other hand, social, political, religious stagnation, debasement, servitude, flow from their own sources, revealing, at the same time, by unmistakable marks, the sources from which they flow.

In accordance with long usage, the chief magistrate of the State has called upon us to unite to-day in solemn acts of thanksgiving to God. The usage is most becoming. The call is one to which we should heartily respond. God is great. No creature mind can comprehend him. It becomes us to adore in his presence. But he is good as great. His mercies can not be numbered. They encompass us in the light and the air, on the land and the ocean, in the processes of nature, the workings of providence, the exploits of grace.

Let us not, however, rest in generalities. The blessings which call for our gratitude and praise are visible as they are numerous and great. Health is in all our borders. The garner of our husbandmen overflow with food for man and beast. Manufactures and commerce flourish, recompensing the labors of the artisan and the enterprise of the merchant. The present depression is not only temporary but exceptional, and will itself become a blessing, if its salutary lessons are heeded. Our social condition is one of comparative safety, purity, and happiness. The means of popular education and elevation are numerous and efficient. Above all—and essentially comprehensive of all—we have political and religious liberty. We have these blessings, too—or the greatest and most essential of them, I make bold to affirm—as they are not possessed by any other nation. And it is this peculiarity in our case, this eminence of our position as a prosperous and a free people, together with the great moral reason of it—under God—that I would now particularly press upon your attention.

I. As to the first, let me lead you on a brief survey. Let me point you to the nations. Let me bid you mark, in passing, their actual condition in comparison with our own, in all the respects which pertain to the elements and the means of national well-being.

Look at Asia—the cradle of the human race—in extent out-measuring any other of the great divisions of the globe, and in population exceeding by millions the aggregate number of the rest of the world. What are its governments, but hoary despotisms? What are its religions, but cruel and debasing impostures? What its thronging millions of people, but slaves?

Look at Africa, next peopled by men, and famous in the annals of ancient civilization and art; among whose cities were Thebes, with its hundred gates, and Carthage, the dreaded enemy of Rome; among whose heroes were Sesostriis and Hannibal, and among whose divines were Tertullian, Cyprian, and Augustin;

and what is Africa, but a continent of almost unbroken barbarism?

Look at the islands of the sea—of the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian, and the Arctic Oceans—at all where those specific influences have not reached, which exert their power and bestow their blessings upon us, and how far down on the scale of physical, mental, social, political, and religious existence! How degraded and miserable their whole population!

Look at America—exclusive of our own beloved republic—through the Canadas and the adjacent territories on the North; through the immense regions stretching along the continent on the West; and through the provinces, states, and kingdoms which spread over the great Southern Peninsula. How broad and how instructive the contrast between all these countries and our own! The only approximation, in any one essential respect, to the position we occupy, is made by our provincial neighbors on the north—a circumstance which altogether illustrates and confirms what we shall presently say as to the great moral reason and means of our own preëminence.

Look, finally, at Europe, where the influences of civilization and religion have been longest in operation, and where, some doubtless imagine, is to be seen the very perfection of society and government. And indeed there is much to admire when we look at Europe. There is a country, in parts of which God has spread out a scenery romantic, beautiful, sublime, in perhaps an unequalled degree, while through the whole of it are a soil and climate fertile and kindly as the well-being of the people require. There are great cities, too, where wealth and rank concentrate vast resources and exhibit their utmost splendor; there are old battle-fields, famous in historic annals, and whose associations yet thrill upon the soul; and there are venerable universities and immense libraries, the repositories of all human knowledge; and there are royal palaces, and parks, and hoary cathedrals, and baronial castles, and many noblest works of science and proudest monuments of art. And to see all these things must greatly interest the intelligent traveller. But these are, after all, only a small part of Europe. Besides these, there is a very large amount of men, women, and children, of veritable flesh and blood; beings who have sensibilities, and mental and moral capabilities, and rights, too, in reference to government and religion; and whose aggregate number and importance entitle them, in the view we take, to be considered as Europe. And the real question is, What is their condition? Undoubtedly, the displays of royalty and of the nobility, of lords temporal and lords spiritual, are sufficiently frequent and imposing, and to those who are pleased with tinsel and pomp, profoundly impressive; but our inquiry now relates to the people—the masses—the bone and sinew—the essential strength and sub

stance of the nations. How is it with them? What is their actual civil and religious condition? What conceded rights have they as citizens and as creatures of immortality? Alas! I had almost said—no rights, but those of implicit obedience and equally implicit faith. I know how many exceptions there are—and how many more there seem to be—but it is no unconsidered declaration, that the masses of Europe are to-day in unjust and oppressive vassalage. Kingcraft and priestcraft hold them with as rigorous a grasp now as they dare to do, and are combining their resources to make that grasp lasting as it is rigorous. They have never relaxed a claim, never yielded a prerogative, never conceded a right which they were not compelled to do; and they never will. In even sunny France—polite France—where European culture boasts its most finished form; where revolution has followed revolution as the waves on the shore; and where the blood of the people has been poured out like water for the achievement of liberty, only a few are indeed free. The republic has given place to a despotism—constitutional they call it, but still a despotism. Nowhere may the people meet for political discussion, nor indeed to worship God, except under onerous restrictions and liabilities. The press has its censor; the forum its spy; the senate its master; the sacred temple its armed police and soldiery. In a like sense, in which Paris is said to be France, a comparatively few men may be said to be the people of France. The power, privileges, emoluments, and honors of office and rank, are their exclusive possession. A titled thousand usurp the rights which Nature and God declare belong equally to the untitled million.

And cross the channel into Great Britain, undoubtedly the most powerful, enlightened, and elevated nation of Europe. There is, indeed, much to commend. It becomes us especially to look upon her somewhat as children should on a venerable mother, lenient of faults and proud of excellencies. But when we have taken a fair survey of all that is good, there remain essential wrongs sanctioned and enforced on the mass of the people by the very provisions and enactments of the far-famed British constitution. Look at the law of entail, holding up its hoary head and pleading the precedents of a thousand years for the special protection and benefit of the nobility. Apart from the injustice with which it must often operate on the younger members of noble families themselves, look at the glaring wrong it upholds and perpetuates in reference to others. My Lord Buckingham, for example, in maintaining a domestic and public establishment becoming his supposed dignity, runs in debt to the amount of millions of pounds sterling. He owes this to a large number of artisans and tradespeople of all sorts, whose labors and supplies have supported him in his splendid and luxurious style of living, and who can by no means afford to lose their dues. But he can not pay them. He

has indeed an immense property; he has splendid palaces, specimens of exquisite architecture; he has spacious and beautifully ornamented gardens and pleasure-grounds; he has magnificent parks for deer, pheasants, and every variety of game, with natural and artificial ponds for fish; he has immense landed estates—enough, perhaps, to cover the enormous amount of his obligations; but he can not pay. The law will not only not compel him, but even were he disposed, it will not permit him. It may, indeed, enter the poor man's house, and peradventure seize on his last chair, or the scanty bed he rests on from his toil; but when its officer approaches the lordly mansion, he is powerless. The law itself cries out: "Hence—away! These magnificent domains are not to be invaded! They are sacred even from the touch of justice!" And why? why? The owner is a nobleman! A nobleman? Was not Adam his father? and his mother Eve? and were they not mine? There is a nobility which we ought to recognize and honor—the nobility of worth. We can not too profoundly revere it. But must not every liberal mind join me, when I say—away with all such nobility as is made by mere broadcloth or by law!

Glance at another wrong. A majority of the people of England are Dissenters. In heart and conscience they are opposed to the claims and practices of the Established Church, and to the principle of establishment. The political relations of that Church they regard as utterly indefensible, and her distinctive form and principles, as a Christian society, as at clear and pernicious variance with the form and essential principles of the primitive Church of Christ. Yet they are compelled by law—rigorously enforced—to sustain what they thus disapprove; while, at the same time, for opinion's sake, they are made subject to educational, civil, and religious disabilities that involve the grossest injustice.

But this first part of our discourse is occupying an undue portion of time. We may safely rest on this rapid and imperfect survey, to show the eminence of our position as a prosperous and free people. Blemishes there are, indeed, on our character, evils deeply seated and alarming in our social and civil condition, and there are sins stalking through the Republic that spread doubt and gloom over the future; but in a just comparison of our present position with that of other nations, in all the respects which involve and indicate real national prosperity—the social and religious well-being of the people—it is my firm conviction, that we are in clear and signal advance of them all.

I. Our second point relates to the *source* of this distinction. I have asserted the intimate connection of results with causes. I have said that the latter embody in themselves the essential properties which become manifest in the results they produce. If we have

in a peculiar degree the influences and blessings of popular liberty and a pure religion, the reasons and efficient means have been of a corresponding character. What have they been? When, where, and by whom exerted?

We might resolve this inquiry, in part, by a negative process. We might say that our distinction is *not* the result of geographical position, giving us facilities for prosperity which others have not; nor of any peculiarly genial influences of climate; nor of any unwonted fertility of soil; nor of any variety or abundance of physical resources above those of other nations.

Look again at Asia. In physical respects God has made a great part of that continent as the very garden of the globe, full of richness and beauty.

Look again at Africa. Where does nature yield her supplies for the wants and welfare of men more spontaneously, or in greater variety and profusion?

Look again at South-America. What majestic mountains, what noble rivers, what mineral wealth, what a balmy atmosphere, what a prolific soil, incomparably superior, I had almost said, in these respects to these cold and once sterile regions of the North. Yet look at the mass of the people—poor, ignorant, superstitious, oppressed. They have heard of Liberty, and long for its blessings, and for years revolutions and counter-revolutions have followed each other in rapid succession, but with what result? It has been a game of mere mercenaries or of despots, for their own aggrandizement under the holy name of freedom. What is the matter in South-America? What crushing, stifling, paralyzing incubus presses upon that glorious land?

Look again at Europe. What a brilliant sky pours down its light and influences, for instance, on Italy! What capabilities of production and of commerce are there! How many historic associations to inspire and ennoble the population! What unrivalled masters in statuary and painting have lived among them! What philosophers and poets of immortal name! Ay, and what patriots have bled among them! Look at beautiful Italy, the land of Cincinnatus, of Brutus, of the Scipios! Have the people any right there? Have they a word to say, as to who shall govern them, or by what laws they will be governed? Have they a free press there? Can they worship God there, according to the dictates of their conscience? Have they an open Bible there? Have they freedom of thought and of speech there, so that a man can utter what he thinks, in no danger of fines, or imprisonment, or death? Alas! massive and galling are the chains on beautiful Italy!

Or, as another instance, glance at Ireland, rich yet wretched; capable of sublime elevation, yet for centuries depressed and debased to almost the lowest depth. What is the matter in Ireland?

What has been the matter for generations? Why such masses of her people, despite their natural gifts, in such melancholy ignorance and servility? Such poverty and superstition? In reply to these inquiries, it will not do to talk of geographical position, for none can be better. Nor will it do to refer to climate or soil, or natural characteristics of any kind, for God has been munificent there in all these respects. Genial suns, refreshing showers, and invigorating breezes try to bless Ireland, and within her sea-girdled shores are millions of most fertile acres. Nor will it wholly satisfy our demand to tell of governmental grievances and oppressions. It may be admitted that there have been and are such oppressions and grievances. Ireland has suffered from English mismanagement and injustice. India and China are not alone in bearing witness, if to British beneficence, so also to British wrongs. The Emerald Isle can justly join them. But when those wrongs have all been recited, and we have assigned them their full share in inducing the special misery of Ireland, we have by no means reached its radical and prolific reason. The womb of Ireland's long-continued calamities, is neither in the British parliament nor on the British throne. It is among the people themselves. It is the blighting and corrupting presence of the Harlot which has cursed Ireland. That inexorable power which, centuries ago, laid its grasp on the intellect and the conscience of the nation, and ever since has fiercely forbidden the light of human knowledge and the light of heaven to shine upon either—which has borne down masses of the people in the darkness of ignorance and under the terrors of superstition—that power is the ultimate and dread source of Ireland's debasement and wo.

But we must turn from this negative process. It is plain to the most superficial observer that the inquiry into the cause or causes of our preëminence, in all those things which constitute national prosperity, has no solution in geography, or climate, or soil, or natural advantages of any kind. From physical nature, we must go with our inquiry into the sphere of principles, and examine the character and doings of men.

First of all, indeed, it becomes us with devout gratitude to say: "God hath not dealt so with any nation." Excepting the ancient Hebrews, I believe this to be a literal truth. An historical induction of facts, showing the aspects and bearing of his holy and gracious providence towards us along our national progress, would furnish a most instructive and impressive demonstration. Ah! my brethren, when in the midst of our blessings we forget God, we are guilty of unnatural and enormous ingratitude. We forget Him who gave us an ancestry such as no other nation ever had; who in the days of our colonial dependence cherished us with all the tenderness of a father; who gave wisdom and unanimity to our councils, and courage and victory to our arms in the fearful

struggle of the Revolution, and has ever been the right arm of our defense and the rock of our salvation.

But we shall not lose sight of God, if we turn to contemplate the agencies he has used in blessing us; if we ask, what principles and what men, under him, have been the source and means of our national exaltation. Indeed the text requires this view. After recognizing God as the original source of blessings to the Hebrews, it proceeds to specify the great instrument of their creation and diffusion. "He hath not dealt so with any nation," exclaims the Psalmist, "and as for his *judgments*," that is, his word, ordinances, and sacred institutions, as for these, "they have not known them." A most distinct testimony that the presence and power of God's word and laws, were the great source of blessing and glory to his covenant people; and the want of them the great and sore evil which pressed heavily on the surrounding nations. Just as where the sun, is there will be light, and warmth, and life, and beauty; and where he is not, there will be cold, and darkness, and death.

I hold it to be susceptible of demonstration that the vital principles of all real political and religious liberty, and, by consequence, of all real national prosperity, were enshrined, as the germ in its seed, in the truths and institutions which God gave the Israelites by Moses. Accordingly we find, that so long and just in proportion as that people adhered to those truths and institutions, they were enlightened, virtuous, and free. Not a period of depression, anarchy, or servitude occurs in their entire history, except in connection with their corruption or abandonment of these means of elevation and blessing; nor, on the other hand, was there ever a period of national security, prosperity, and glory, which was not connected with a return to the revelation and ordinances of God. Faithfully walking in the light of that revelation, and in the spirit and observance of those ordinances, the Jews would have been a united, exalted, glorious nation to this day. Alas! the insanity of human wisdom and human pride! They did not, they would not know the things which belonged to their peace, and therefore, at length, every vestige of their national existence and glory was swept away by the just judgments of God!

I hold it to be also an equally clear truth, that these essential principles of personal and national well-being were reinshrined in the institutions, and reasserted with still greater distinctness and power in the doctrines of Jesus Christ. In them, "the true foundations of society and government—of the authority of public and the obedience of private men—of the political and civil rights of the citizen, are laid in moral obligation, with God as its author and man as its subject. In them, the code of public morals is founded on the code of private morals. Government is regarded as an institution for the good of society, and rulers as only agents,

while the relative rights and duties of the governor and the governed are referred to the plain practical sense—the divine, yet simple wisdom—the pure, just, and immutable principles of Christian morals.” In a word, the only truly philosophical and adequate basis and constitution of society and government, are presented in the holy doctrines and simple institutions of the New Testament.

What unwonted impulse Christian ideas gave to the human mind, I can not stop to relate; nor how waves of influence and blessing circled out from the central points of evangelic instruction and labor, until almost the extremities of the world felt the strange sensations and impulses of waking, life, progress. Great results were achieved. Sublime movements in the mental and moral sphere of things began. A new power was felt operating on the individual and on the state, ennobling the peasant and claiming authority over the emperor.

God, however, permitted the truth to be overlaid again with corruption, and the rising hopes of the world were shrouded. Human wisdom and ambition, with intolerable effrontery, dared to set themselves above the wisdom and the simplicity of the Gospel, and were justly left to the appalling consequences. And yet, through those dismal periods which succeeded that early corruption of evangelic truth, that fearful putting out of the divine light, there were still men, and bodies of men, who, in the midst of persecution and death, maintained their integrity and held by and transmitted the truth. They were the Cathari, the Paulicians, the Albigenes, the Waldenses, the Lollards, and the Bohemians. Tortured, butchered, burnt, driven from nation to nation, and even from continent to continent, they still bore witness for Christ, and preserved the doctrines and institutions of His holy Church, until the truth broke again upon the world, as in a flood of light and glory, at the Reformation. Yes, across that dreary interval there was a little stream of life—some precious rays of imperishable brightness. The progress of liberty, then, has been likened to “the stream of the desert, or the summer-brook passing through the wilderness, but still keeping its clear and pebbly channel, rippling over the stones, and murmuring in the silence of the night, refreshing the weary traveller in his wanderings, and giving him to anticipate the time, when he should find a broader surface,” peradventure, some beautiful lake or nobler ocean, where he might bathe and invigorate himself, and around whose shores he should behold fertile and waving fields, and partake of delicious and abundant fruits. That time came, in the moral import of this comparison, at the epoch of the Reformation.

On the principles and character of that great event I should love to dwell—and they belong to our subject. But time presses, and I must hasten. Let me just say, it was the fruit of the Bible. Luther was a mere instrument, though a noble one—scattering

broadcast the incorruptible seed. Though bred a monk, and as devoutly pious as the best of them, he was twenty years old, before his eye rested on the word of God. But the effect then was electric—resistless. He bowed to its supreme authority; he felt within him the kindling energies of a new and divine life: from that day, he was the indomitable champion of the rights of man and the truth of God. And when, from the wild heights of Wartburg, he threw down among the German people his admirable translation of the Scriptures, the effect upon their minds was like that he had felt on his own. The multitude were let into a new world of ideas and feelings—they felt an irresistible impulse upward from the degradation in which they had been held for centuries, and which they had been taught was to be their heritage forever; and at the sight, priests and tyrants raved and trembled.

“The grand result,” says Dr. Merle D’Aubigné, “of all the principles of the Reformation, and of all the considerations flowing from them, is worthy of such a cause and of such champions. It centres in two words—duty and usefulness; duty as the only criterion of right; usefulness, as the only standard of merit. In a word, the Reformation ordained, not only for its own day, and for the communities of that day, but for all time and for all nations, that the New Testament is the only genuine moral constitution of society, and its principles the only safe and wise foundation of all civil and political establishments.”

But the immediate demands of our subject lead us from the continent—from the exciting scenes and noble actors there, to our own ancestral island. It is one of the signal features of the Reformation that it took so strong a hold upon the Saxon race. Its principles and spirit were more readily and thoroughly received by them than by any other. The personal ambition and lust of Henry the Eighth only hastened an event that was destined to come, whether kings and parliaments befriended or opposed. It was impossible, and is impossible, to trample upon Saxons forever. England became nominally Protestant. She would have become, though at a later period, genuinely so, if that monarch and his successors had not interposed their selfishness and power to retain all the forms, orders, and essential principles of the old Hierarchy, with only a change in the headship and the name. For long years that was almost the only change. But during those years, and as a result of that merely nominal Reformation, there sprung up the noble race of men, whom their enemies called, by way of reproach, and whom we call in love and highest honor, The Puritans; the choice wheat, or rather the fine gold of England and Scotland, in those days when the principles and the souls of men were fearfully tried. Shall I venture to describe those grand, those peerless men, heroes as well as saints? I confess, my admiration of them is so unqualified and profound, as might endanger

the impartiality of my representation. Let another, then, pronounce their eulogy; another, whom no one will suspect of over-loving them—an Edinburgh Reviewer. "The Puritans," says the now Lord Macaulay, "were men whose minds had derived a peculiar character from the daily contemplation of superior beings and eternal interests. Not content with acknowledging in general terms an over-ruling providence, they habitually ascribed every event to the will of that Great Being, for whose power nothing was too vast; for whose inspection nothing was too minute. To know him, to serve him, to enjoy him, was the great end of existence. They rejected with contempt the ceremonious homage which other sects substituted for the worship of the soul. Instead of catching occasional glimpses of the Deity through an obscuring veil, they aspired to gaze full on the ineffable brightness, and to commune with him face to face.

"Hence originated their contempt for terrestrial distinctions. The difference between the greatest and meanest of mankind seemed to vanish, when compared with the boundless interval which separated the whole race from Him on whom their own eyes were constantly fixed. They recognized no title to superiority but his favor; and, confident of that, they despised all the accomplishments, and all the dignities of the world. If they were unacquainted with the works of the philosophers and poets"—as they were *not*—"they were deeply read in the oracles of God. If their names were not found in the register of heralds, they felt assured that they were recorded in the Book of Life. If their steps were not accompanied by a splendid train of menials, legions of ministering angels had charge over them. Their palaces were houses not made with hands; their diadems, crowns of glory which should never fade away. On the rich and the eloquent, on nobles and priests, they looked down, for they esteemed themselves rich in a more precious treasure, and eloquent in a more sublime language; nobles by the right of an earlier creation, and priests by the imposition of a mightier hand. The very humblest of them was a being to whom a mysterious and terrible importance belonged; on whose slightest action the spirits of light and darkness looked with anxious interest; who had been destined, before heaven and earth were created, to enjoy a felicity which should continue when heaven and earth have passed away. For his sake empires had risen, and flourished, and decayed. For his sake, the Almighty had proclaimed his will by the pen of the evangelist and the harp of the prophet. He had been wrested, by no common deliverer, from the grasp of no common foe. He had been ransomed by the sweat of no vulgar agony—by the blood of no earthly sacrifice. It was for him that the sun had been darkened; that the rocks had been rent; that the dead had arisen; that all nature had shuddered at the sufferings of her expiring God!"

Undoubtedly the eloquent writer was sufficiently intent on his antitheses, but in the highest and best sense of his delineation, it is no more eloquent than just. Those men were men of noble ideas and noble hearts. They asserted, they bled for, and when, after a time, they came into power, they gloriously exemplified the principles of human liberty. They proclaimed them to the nations, and the grand notes reverberated through Europe: "Mutual rights, popular suffrage, administrative responsibility, and the sovereignty of the people!" And more—they said, and they said in thunder tones: "Religion must be free!" Where did they get such ideas? From the Bible. And such principles? From the Bible. And such lofty purposes? From the Bible. And such invincible power to declare and effect them? From the God of the Bible—Jehovah Sabaoth!

We are accustomed to use the term Puritans, however, with a too limited application. We mean by it, almost exclusively, that company of noble men who first, in the heart of England, and in the bosom of the English Church, asserted the essential doctrines of liberty, and who suffered and died in their defense. They were originally Episcopalians. Afterwards, when with an open Bible and unfettered mind, they examined the question of the apostolic Church, most of them became Presbyterians; many of them, however, and they inferior to none in the love of liberty, the acquisition of learning, and the lustre of holiness, became Independents. But these were not the only Puritans. In its legitimate meaning, the term belongs also to the equally resolute and holy champions of liberty and Gospel truth, who lived then in Presbyterian Ulster and ever glorious Scotland; to multitudes in the churches of Germany, Holland, and Geneva; and last, but not least, to the immortal Huguenots. All these were Puritans. All these took their stand on the same great and eternal truths; all these were animated by the same lofty and sacred spirit; all these girded on the same spiritual armor, and sometimes, when they were compelled to it, the armor which is not spiritual, and, battled side by side in those stern and mighty contentings, whose result, among others, also great and glorious, is our national elevation and freedom.

It is true, however, that when we trace the stream of our national life and blessings in their earlier course, while they were yet, as it were, rippling under ground, or through dense thickets, or around the base of moveless rocks, or made their way through stagnant or turbid morasses, we naturally trace them first and chiefly along the Scotch and English channels. These appear to us the main streams; the others, tributaries. And for this reason, we said, that the immediate demands of our subject led us from the continent to England.

The men, then, whom God employed, were Puritans; and what

were the Principles? Why, as we have already asserted, they were the principles of the New Testament; they were divine truth, emancipated from the corruptions and the bonds of an apostate Church and an enslaved world, and proclaimed again, in almost the simplicity and purity with which it fell from the lips of the great teacher—Jesus Christ. That truth, thus emancipated, was fraught with life and power. It was seen to be vastly comprehensive, to embrace the duties and the rights of men, in their social and civil relations, as well as in their relation to the service and throne of God. Hume, indeed, has sneeringly remarked, that “some men of the greatest parts and most extensive knowledge the nation at that time possessed, could not enjoy any peace of mind, because they were obliged to hear prayers offered up to the Divinity by a priest covered with a white linen vestment,” thus insinuating that the great question which agitated those men and those times, was a mere question of surplice or no surplice. But Hume misrepresented their principles, for the simple reason that his infidel heart hated their sanctity; and he convicts himself of this misrepresentation when he elsewhere says, “that the prevalence of the principles of civil liberty was essential to their party;” and again, when, notwithstanding his strong prejudice, he declares “that the precious spark of liberty was kindled and preserved by the Puritans alone,” and “that to them the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.”

But suppose the question had been what Hume thus falsely insinuates, it involved, nevertheless, a principle, and a great principle. It was essentially a question of the highest liberty, whether the conscience should be forced or be free. John Hampden—a name to be revered wherever liberty and religion shed their blessings—John Hampden said to the civil functionary who called to demand that unconstitutional tax, in the case of the ship-money: “Sir, I will not pay it.” “Oh! but if you refuse,” said the royal servant, “you will shake the authority of the crown, and bring into contempt the word of the sovereign.” “Let the crown decree justice and rule in righteousness,” replied the patriot, “and no one can bring it into contempt.” “But, really, sir, it is only a trifle,” said the officer, “it is only twenty shillings.” “Twenty shillings,” said Hampden, “will serve as much to embody a principle as twenty thousand pounds; and, sir, I will not pay it!” He did not pay it; and the people of England, in their hearts, blessed him, and to this day bless him. And so with the surplice, if that had been the question. It served to embody a principle as really as though it had been a crown.

But the surplice was not the question. It was only one of the little things, among many that were great, which the real question involved. It was one of the many points where the imperishable principles of Christian liberty came into collision with the

assumptions and enactments of arbitrary power; but it was only one. The real question, in the origin of it, covered the whole ground of liberty of conscience in matters of religion; and then, in the second step, the whole ground of human duties and rights, in reference to civil government. Conscience is not to be forced, said the Puritans, and so say we. Neither priest nor king, alone or in combination, in august cabinet or holy synod, may fasten a fetter or chain upon the soul; they may not bind it, in any part, or with any thing, though it be only a piece of white linen. And were not the Puritans right? Who is there in this land of freedom so bigoted, or so craven, but will heartily respond, Ay, they were right. In reference to some things, in themselves indifferent; in reference to more, in themselves wrong, the monarch said, You shall! the burly ecclesiastics chimed in with the royal cry, You shall! and then the whole train of interested courtiers and fawning sycophants reëchoed, You shall! Looking first to God, and then, with unquailing eye, on king, priests, nobles, and the whole crowd of their servile retainers, the Puritans calmly replied, We will not! And, thanks to God, they did not. The fires of Smithfield, two thousand benefices sacrificed in a single day, and the sufferings of the Covenanters, attest their sincerity; the glories of the Protectorate, the constitutional liberties of the united kingdoms, and the existence, the unparalleled growth, the social, civil, and religious elevation of the great American Republic, attest their perseverance and success.

These were the men, and such their principles. For a moment or two, let us glance at the conflict. On the one side was truth, on the other, power. The one could nobly argue; the other, remorselessly manacle, scourge, and burn. Oh! it was no common contest; and, as we have seen, those were no mere shapes of men who armored themselves for it, and joined in the fearful fray. Power, long time, seemed to triumph, and yet truth had the victory. If you can meet my arguments with nothing better than the prison or the stake, that prison may be very dreary to dwell in, and that stake very fearful to go to; but I am conqueror. In the darkest night that ever rested on men, the free and soaring spirit has been felt to be immensely superior to the mere brute force that was tearing or burning the quivering limbs; and so it was then. Long before the great and decisive issue, mere power was seen to be impotent, while truth was felt to be resistless.

The real question in this contest, I said, covered the whole ground of civil and religious rights. This is plain, not only from the declared principles of our fathers, but from the actual facts of the history. Two or three of these will be sufficient to show this, and illustrate the character of those struggles which have resulted in such blessings to us.

The case of Hampden, already adverted to, was exclusively a

question of civil liberty. The case of Richard Chambers was another. This honest merchant dared to say, in the presence of the Star Chamber, "That the traders of Turkey were not more screwed up than the merchants of England;" and though he thought he had both the truth and the law on his side, he was sentenced to two thousand pounds, and was thrown into prison for twelve years. When, at length, he came out, he came out, as to this world, a ruined man.

The learned barrister, William Pryme, sinned in a different way. He wrote a book in behalf of the Public Morals. He denounced in it masques, plays, theatres, and things of this kind, as pernicious and demoralizing. If we may judge from the severity of his punishment, his crime was, indeed, enormous. Archbishop Laud and his creatures wreaked upon him a terrible vengeance: First, they burned his book, and so refuted its arguments; then, they degraded him from his profession as a lawyer; then, they compelled him to stand in the pillory, both at Cheapside and at Westminster; then, they subjected him to a fine of ten thousand pounds; then, they caused both his ears to be cut off; then, when he would not recant—though his loving wife had stitched those members on again—they ordered the stumps to be sawed out, and they were sawed out; and then, they condemned him to perpetual imprisonment! Doubtless, this noble lawyer loved his ears—even the stumps of them, but the result showed that he loved truth and liberty more.

The next instance is in the sphere of religion. Alexander Leighton, venerable for years and piety, wrote another book. He called it "Zion's Plea against Prelacy." He exposed in it and rebuked the corruptions of the Church. His strong arguments struck dangerously upon crozier and mitre—almost upon the throne. He was accused of the unpardonable crime. The same infamous Star Chamber arraigned him at its tribunal. "It is true, I wrote it," said the venerable man, "but I did not wish to disturb the minds of the people. My design was, that no detriment should come to the Church by the policy of our rulers." The sentence, which followed this confession, was this: "That he be degraded of his ministry; that he be brought into the pillory at Westminster, and there be whipped; that after some convenient space—he still being in the pillory—one of his ears should be cut off; his nose be slit; and that he be branded in the face with the letters S. S.; that he be carried to the Fleet Prison; that at some convenient time afterwards, he be taken into the pillory at Cheapside, on a market-day, and there be whipped again; that then, being still in the pillory, he have his other ear cut off; and then, that he be carried thence to the prison of the Fleet, until he shall pay our Sovereign Lord the King ten thousand pounds, or remain there during life!" This horrible sentence

was executed with every possible aggravation. "Every lash," said the suffering martyr, afterwards, "brought away the flesh!" Yet, when the sentence was pronounced, the pious Laud took off his Archbishop's cap, and gave God thanks for this signal victory!

These things were done in England. They are merely specimens. Let me point you to a single one in Scotland. It was at a later period—after the Restoration, but it belongs to the same series of sacrifices and agonies which were the price of our freedom. The victim was a poor man, but a man of God—John Brown, of Muirkirk. His crime was, that he was a Presbyterian. To be sure, it was a great one—a very great one, but it was the only one they pretended to allege. "John Brown," said the brutal Claverhouse—one of Walter Scott's lauded cavaliers, "go to your prayers, for you must die." He knelt by his own door, and poured out his soul to God, in thoughts and words so affecting, that the fierce dragoons with Claverhouse were overcome. When he rose from his knees, the wretch ordered him to take farewell of his weeping wife and children. It was a sublime farewell: "Now, Isabel," said the martyr, "the day is come of which I told you, when I first proposed marriage to you." "Indeed, John," she replied, "I can willingly part with you." "Then," added he, "this is all I desired; I have no more to do but die; I have been prepared to meet death for many years." So saying, he kissed her and the children—wishing them "all the purchased and promised blessings"—and then presented himself for the sacrifice. "*Fire!*" cried Claverhouse. But the power of that prayer, and of that holy farewell, was still upon those soldiers. They would not—could not fire. Enraged at the scene, the monster raised his own weapon, and sped the fatal ball; then, turning to the wife in her agony, said: "And what do you think of him now?" "I ever thought good of him," she replied, "and as much now as ever." "It were but just to lay thee beside him," responded the murderer. "I doubt not your cruelty would go that length," she said, "but how will ye answer for this morning's work?" "To man," rejoined the wretch, "I can be answerable; as for God, I will take him in mine own hand!" Saying thus, with his dragoons he departed. Poor Isabel laid her unconscious babe on the grass, gathered the scattered brains of her beloved husband, bound up, tenderly, his mangled head, spread over him her homely plaid, and then sat down and wept! And yet there are those who would put Claverhouse in the same Calendar of Saints with Laud! Indeed, their claims to canonization are equal.

Thus, then, truth struggled with power; and, I repeat, it was no common conflict. On either side, the combatants were in solemn earnest. At every now and then, the truth seemed to be over-

come, to lie prostrate, or in chains. But, presently, she was on her feet again; and the increasing numbers rallying under her sacred banner, and the still deeper and more vital wounds she inflicted on her foe, showed that, somehow, she had gathered strength in her apparent prostration; she went slowly but sublimely on to victory. Prerogatives made reluctant concessions; the Bible was given to the people; the church was modelled more like the divine pattern; kings were instructed how to reign; and when they persisted in their intolerable tyranny, they were shown that nations can live and flourish without them. There came, even in England, the Commonwealth—a breaking forth of the national energies and greatness, above the dismal periods on either side; when Manchester and Fairfax fought for the Covenant; when Lockhart and Whitlock, as ambassadors, carried the forms of Puritan worship into other lands; when Blake commanded the wide ocean; when Goodwin and Baxter, Owen and Howe, were the Chaplains of the Parliament and the Court; when John Milton was Secretary of State, and Oliver Cromwell was Protector!

But we must turn our thoughts. At an early period in this conflict, some of the Puritans acted on the principle which Jeremiah Burroughs afterwards nobly uttered on the floor of the Westminster Assembly: "If we may not have our liberty," said that holy man, "to govern ourselves in our own way, so long as we are peaceable towards the civil magistrate, we are resolved to suffer or to go to some other place of the world, where we may enjoy our liberty." Many of them came during the reign of that pedantic renegade, James I., to "some other place of the world;" many more followed them in the succeeding reigns. Hampden, Cromwell, and Owen, attempted to come, but tyranny, or God, held them back, that they might accomplish the work assigned them there. That other place, was our own beloved land. God would seem to have reserved it for the last great experiment of human liberty. Its then wild shores received our exiled fathers, bearing in their flight the great principles which they had asserted amidst the altars and thrones of despotism, and avowing it as their express purpose, in seeking this new world, to be free! It was their first and constant endeavor to found and rear the Empire of Liberty!

Do you ask, Did they succeed? Look over this great Republic. Doubtless, painful scenes meet our view. There is enough to make Christians pray and patriots tremble. But, after every abatement which justice requires or permits—oh! then, what a glorious inheritance is ours—bought with sufferings and blood of others—but most free to us! And when you see the comparative elevation and comfort of the people, when you see the institutions of social life, of learning, of government, and of religion, as they exist here, and exert their influence, extend their protection, and

diffuse their blessings, can you hesitate for a moment as to their source? Is it not visible as the day, that they are the precious fruit of the principles and efforts of our fathers as Christian free-men—principles and efforts which they declared and put forth for the very purpose of securing these identical results? As certainly as that heat comes from fire—as that water gushes from the fountain—as that light beams from the sun—so certainly are the elements and means of our national preëminence and well-being resident alone in the simple—Protestant—Apostolic—New Testament faith! Apart from that faith, we go back to grope in a darkness, and to be crushed by a despotism, dense and horrible as those from which, by the sole power of that faith, our illustrious ancestors emerged.

It is a question of intense interest: Are our liberties to remain? Will the future behold us still elevated and ascending on the way of a real and enduring national greatness? Or will our institutions be overthrown? Will our glory be extinguished? Will our stripes and stars be covered with the sable pall? Will our eagle bite the dust?

The brave, the wise, the good reply, God save our country! Let all the people say, Amen!

Alas! our sky is not unclouded. Fervent as may be our hope, there is, at least, some ground of fear. We may be gathered to our graves in peace, but I confess those are sad scenes which sometimes rise upon my vision when, in the midsts of present sins and conflicts, I think of the future. One thing is certain; certain as the fixed laws of nature and the immutable truth of God, those principles and that spirit which gave us our existence and our distinguished blessings as a nation, can alone preserve them. If you take the deep, broad, firm base away, the superstructure, no matter how decorated or imposing, will fall; and the ruin will be the more complete and frightful, the more proud and lofty the edifice!

Hear, then, the terms on which we may still be elevated, great, and enduring.

We must sacredly guard as an *imperishable and universal right, Liberty of Conscience*. If even we deny this to others, the time is near when it will cease from ourselves. And, without this liberty, there is no liberty worth the name. In all matters of opinion, men, in respect to their fellow men, are to be absolutely free. Be they Christians or Jews, Mohammedans, Pagans, or Atheists, for their creed they are responsible to God alone. You may argue with them, you may refute their reasons, you may expose their fallacies, you may protest against their errors, you may subdue their understanding with truth, you may win their hearts by love; but away with the pincers, the screws, the fagots, the

chain, the axe, the halter! Never, in the land of the Puritans, let the finger of compulsion touch the soul!

We must also vigilantly *cherish a free and pure Press*. On its freedom depends its power; on its purity, its power to do good. Combining these, it more than realizes the sublime idea of Archimedes. It can—it will move the world. But this is one of those agencies which can curse as well as bless; which, too often, does curse. Not the least among the perils of liberty comes of that interminable issue of the press in the form of evil books, which flood the land, and throw their spell and pollution chiefly upon the young, and not unoften find a place in even Christian families. To stay this evil, what shall we do? Call back the days of the censors? or abridge the freedom of the press to secure its purity? Shall we station an armed police in the study of the scholar—in the office of the publisher—in the store of the tradesman? Shall we demand on the title-page of every book or pamphlet the old imprimates of the powers that be? Shall we do here, as they do in Austria, in Italy, in Rome? No, no! Let us be pure ourselves, and patronize only that which is pure, and if selfishness and corruption will still prostitute some presses to send out malignity and error, let us erect others, and ply them with redoubled vigor, in diffusing love and truth. It is said that Voltaire first employed tracts as the propagandists of infidelity. He little thought they would become so powerful an instrument and support of the cause he so earnestly labored to destroy.

We must, moreover, multiply and maintain the means of a *substantial popular Education*. I have little faith, indeed, in human nature, when the mind only is enlightened. I have no conception that mere knowledge will ever prove strong enough to grapple with and overcome the innate tendencies to corruption, whether in an individual or a nation; and yet, if it be true that an enlightened people can be enslaved, it is still more certain that an ignorant people can not be free. It is utterly absurd to talk of freedom for men who do not know what freedom means. Look at the lands of tyranny, the world over and time through. Without exception they are lands of darkness—lands where the common mind is excluded from knowledge. What an illustration on this point exists among ourselves! Why not educate the slave? Why, but for the reason that such a process would almost inevitably set him free?

There are, indeed, some grave difficulties connected with the subject of popular education which I can not now discuss; difficulties touching the state on one side and religion on the other. It is plain, however, that simple knowledge, while it may not be able to repress corruption already existing, has no legitimate tendency to produce corruption. Hence the absurdity of charging on the public schools of New-York, as was done a few days since

by the Rev. John Hughes, the increasing crimes of that city. Pray, tell me, how can instruction in geography, grammar, history, mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, corrupt? And what almost sublime effrontery, in such a charge, from such a quarter, when every intelligent man knows that the system for which he pleads as a substitute for ours, has ever been the foster-mother of ignorance, and hot-bed of corruption! But whether by Church or State, or both, our people must be educated—the whole people. We can not afford to have an aristocracy of knowledge. We want, not only our Harvards and Yales, our institutions of theology, medicine, and law, for professional culture, but we want also schools in every parish—enough for the mental wants of the entire population. The soldier who fights our battles; the sailor who mans our ships; the day-laborer; the mechanic; the merchant; our wives and daughters, as well as our sons and fathers, must be solidly and wisely educated, as one of the terms of rational and enduring liberty.

Furthermore, we *must hold fast upon the Bible*. It is the great charter of liberty. It is the only exhaustless fountain of life and light to men and to nations. It was the Bible which made our fathers so strong, valiant, and holy. It was from its pages they drew those large ideas, those lofty purposes, those divine affections. And when severing themselves from the throne and land of oppression, they crossed the Atlantic to rear the empire of freedom, like true philosophers, as well as devout Christians, they solemnly laid the Bible as the foundation and chief cornerstone. The gift of Heaven has made us all that we are, in respect to whatsoever is truly great and good.

Let us understand, however, there is no charm in the mere possession of the Bible. It has no power as a sealed or unstudied book. If we keep it, like those relics of royalty in the Tower, to be brought out only on occasions of state, or exhibited to curious and admiring strangers, it will do us no good. We must have it open, circulated, read, studied. We must ponder on its divine lessons. We must imbue our whole mental and moral being with its truths and spirit. We must make it, if we can, the controlling influence around every fire-side. We must see to it that its purifying power is felt by the young. We must build upon it, as their chief basis, our schools of learning, our institutions of religion, our whole fabric of society and government.

And in order to this, we must insist on the unqualified *right of private judgment* in reference to the Bible. Make a man a slave in religion, and it matters not what else he may be, you have accomplished all that the most insatiable despotism requires. And well they know this, who claim the enormous power. Bind my religious convictions to priest or church, to court or council, and the sacrifice of every thing else to this monstrous Juggernaut be-

comes a duty, yea, a pleasure. In such a servitude the chain is not upon the limbs, but upon the *soul*. No, an open Bible, and an unfettered intellect and conscience in interpreting that Bible, we must have, or the whole structure of our liberties will at length exist in only the name!

Still further, we must *preserve inviolate the Christian Sabbath*. A nation without the Sabbath, will presently be a nation without God. It is not only invaluable and imperative as God's great provision for recreating the exhausted energies of the physical life; it is not only of incalculable worth and efficiency in diffusing those influences which cement, purify, and exalt society; but it is essential, too, in preserving among men a knowledge of the truth—I had almost said of the being of God; certainly, of any just and ennobling conceptions of Him. And when nations forget God, what remains? What must be the history of their future? That was a sublime scene in the assembly of those great and wise men who framed our national Constitution. They had been in session for weeks; they had searched for precedents in all history; they had examined constitutions of states and models of government; but they made no progress; they seemed to themselves still afar from political truth. At length Franklin arose. Addressing the President, he solemnly said: "Sir, in the beginning of the contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for the divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard; they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor; and have we now forgotten that powerful Friend? or do we imagine that we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth—that *God governs in the affairs of men*." He closed his address by moving that God be recognized, and his aid implored in daily and solemn prayer. Thenceforth, that assembly looked unto God.

The Constitution is indeed framed, and we live prosperously under its wise provisions. But shall we now forget the God whose blessing its illustrious framers felt was indispensable then? Have we a wisdom superior to theirs? Or are we in any wise less dependent on the goodness and power of Jehovah?

The Sabbath is the day when, as a nation, we can recognize God; when we can send up the tribute of a nation's gratitude—the voice of a nation's prayer. We must have the Sabbath as a day of holy quietude and worship. The laborer should rest; the din of traffic should be hushed; the departures and arrivals of steamers should cease; the noise of the rail-way should be still; from the domestic shrine families should go up to the public sanctuary; the devout, grateful, holy worship of the nation should be offered unto God. We must have the Sabbath for the new life it imparts to

wearied nature. We must have the Sabbath for the impulse and expansion it gives to the intellect of the nation, bringing before it themes of thought, which occupy and aggrandize angelic minds. We must have the Sabbath for its vast moral and spiritual power. We must have the Sabbath as the strong right arm of our national defense, as the impregnable bulwark of our free institutions.

One thought more, and I will close. We must earnestly and *persistingly seek the Holy Spirit of God*. His were the energies which, brooding over old chaos, evoked from the turbulent gloom light, order, and beauty. His are the energies which, brooding over the passions of men, can calm them; over the affections of men, can change them; over the indomitable wills of men, can subdue and transform them. Edmund Burke said: "It is written in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds can not be free. Their passions forge their fetters." The Spirit of God alone can reach this deep disease, this immedicable wound of our common nature. We accord much to true theoretic principles; much to the instincts and affections of humanity and patriotism; much to the general intelligence of the people; much to the power of a pure morality; but, after all, the great and permanent elements, as of individual, so of national elevation and blessings, are in the sanctifying influence of the Holy One. They are freemen whom God makes free. Regenerate men have noblest liberty, and most beautify and guard that which others have. It is the utterance of a profound philosophy, as well as the voice of God: "*Righteousness exalteth a nation!*"

Let our beloved country hold fast by those truths, and act upon them, and no tongue can express the magnificence of her future! Let her disregard and reject them, and her doom is sure. She will sink ingloriously in the grave of impious and perished nations!

